



## **The Conditions of Leadership Self-Assessment**

**Working Document**

**The Wallace Foundation**  
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## OVERVIEW

States, districts, schools, universities, and leadership preparation programs face challenges as they make decisions about which standards or leader performance areas to emphasize in preparing aspiring leaders and in supporting new and experienced leaders. They need to assess the needs of leaders who will be successful in turning around low performing schools and to determine which aspects of the system (“conditions”) facilitate or impede them in this important work.

The Conditions of Leadership Self-Assessment is designed to help users reflect on the conditions in their districts or states that affect the behaviors and impact of education leaders. The content of the Conditions of Leadership Self-Assessment is informed by the field’s emerging understanding of the impact that conditions and incentives, or the system, have on the behaviors of leaders. While this tool addresses the conditions that impact a leader’s effectiveness, a companion tool – the Leadership Development Quality Assessment Tool—assesses the quality of components of leader development systems and programs within districts and states. The combination of the quality of the training leaders receive and the conditions in which they work will provide the opportunity to develop strategies to improve both – thereby enabling leaders to dramatically improve student achievement.

This tool is structured around those behaviors of effective leaders that were identified by the Wallace Foundation’s Knowledge Committee on Leadership Effectiveness as the most important, and vetted with the states and districts in the Wallace network. They are the ability to:

- Translate Vision Into Operation;
- Demonstrate an Ongoing Commitment to Results;
- Utilize Data Driven Decision-Making;
- Develop Self and Others;
- Acquire, Allocate and Use Resources Effectively;
- Develop Supportive Organizational Cultures;
- Incorporate Diverse Perspectives; and
- Engage Stakeholders.

These behaviors are also congruent with the performance areas for effective leaders that have been identified by the following other organizations and researchers: Council of Chief State School Officers’ *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium: Standards for Leaders* (1996), Knapp and Copland’s *Leading for Learning: Reflective Tools for School and District Leaders*, (2004);

Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson and Wahlstrom's *How Leadership Influences Student Learning* (2004), the Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory's *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement* (2003); and Southern Regional Education Board's *Leadership Initiative* (2004).

These behaviors are based on a notion of striving for what *should be* as opposed to codifying what *is*. They are based on the premises of high expectations for the achievement of all students, a fully coordinated systems approach (from the classroom level, the school level, the district level and the state level) and the ability to lead and sustain effective change initiatives that have impact.

### **Definition of Conditions of Effective Leadership**

An assessment of effective leadership has to take into account the full spectrum of circumstances in which leaders work ("conditions") in order to determine how those conditions affect the behaviors and impact of education leaders. Leaders need to have the authority, resources, incentives and system support to practice effective leader behaviors.

Therefore this self-assessment asks your team to analyze which aspects of your state or district support effective leadership behaviors/practices and which aspects stand in the way. Even well-trained leaders will be ineffective in bad systems over time. In order to have sustaining and wide-scale improvements in the quality of student learning, we cannot count on those leaders who get things done by "going around" the system. Having individual heroes is not the goal. All leaders should have the support to be effective. The system should reinforce and reward effective behaviors and be aligned at all levels, up and down – state, district, school, and classroom – all in support of improving student achievement.

At the district level, the conditions that affect leadership include, but are not limited to: governance structures, resources (money, people and time) allocated, school and district leaders' job descriptions, actual responsibilities, terms of employment and authority to do the job; labor contracts; incentives; and adults' expectations of all children.

At the state level, the conditions that impact leadership include, but are not limited to: state standard for all children and the alignment of resources to achieve them, assessments used to measure progress against standards, the data to which leaders have access in order to make decisions, the incentives created and capacity built through the resources allocated, the processes by which leaders are held accountable, and the political will to bring about change.

The above conditions are provided as examples. In completing the Conditions of Leadership Self-Assessment, your team should bear in mind *all* conditions which may affect the behaviors of leaders within your state or district and consider the "root causes" of these conditions in order to begin to identify strategies to improve the conditions within which education leaders work.

## Directions for Use

The Conditions of Leadership Self-Assessment includes two parts: (1) worksheets and (2) a Conditions Analysis. The worksheets are included to assist district and state teams in reflecting on the affect of conditions within the district or state on leader effectiveness and impact. Eight behaviors of effective leaders are presented.

**LEAD DISTRICTS:** *For each of the leader behaviors on the pages that follow, please describe conditions that support and/or impede school and district leaders and indicate why.*

**SAELP STATES:** *For each of the leader behaviors on the pages that follow, please describe conditions that support and/or impede state-level leaders and indicate why.*

For each leader behavior, your team is asked to:

- (1) Provide up to three conditions which support that leader behavior;
- (2) For each condition that you've included, indicate how that condition supports the leader behavior;
- (3) Provide two to three conditions which impede that leader behavior; and
- (4) For each condition that you've included, indicate how that condition impedes the leader behavior.

**Note:** Some conditions may impact more than one behavior and therefore be listed in more than one place.

## DISTRICT EXAMPLE

Effective Leaders....	What Conditions Support This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?	What Conditions Impede This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Impede this Behavior? (What about this condition presents a barrier to leaders being effective in carry out this behavior?)
<b>Translate Vision Into Operation—</b> They facilitate the development of education policy and the implementation of practice to develop the necessary support systems to achieve vision-driven teaching and learning goals.	1. The state's accountability system.  2. Principal's role has authority for improving instruction in his/her building.	1. Puts in place consequences based on school performance and student achievement results as a major criterion for judging principals' performance.  2. The principal makes decisions regarding curriculum decisions based on student achievement results.	1. Principals' labor contract.  2. There is limited time available to meet with key staff.  3. Lack of discretionary funding.	1. Rewards longevity in position as the main factor for salary increases.  2. Hard to get buy-in without face-to-face discussions.  3. Useful to have some funding for incentives to develop and implement new systems.

## STATE EXAMPLE:

Effective Leaders....	What Conditions Support This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?	What Conditions Impede This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Impede this Behavior? (What about this condition presents a barrier to leaders being effective in carry out this behavior?)
<b>Translate Vision Into Operation—</b> They facilitate the development of education policy and the implementation of practice to develop the necessary support systems to achieve vision-driven teaching and learning goals.	1. Requirement for all state education policies to be developed with key state leaders (i.e., Indiana Roundtable).  2. Governor has a "Children Cabinet" in which statewide issues of education reform are discussed and plans for reform are developed.	1. Ensures that the vision of key state leaders is reflected in state education policy and that they help make it happen.  2. Support of the Governor is essential for clear, visionary direction and implementation (and potential financial support).	1. School boards do not have clear requirements to focus on policy and instruction.  2. Criteria for accreditation of university leader development programs and certification of leaders are different from the criteria on which principals are evaluated on the job.	1. School boards do not concentrate on vision and policy, but instead on personnel decisions and day-to-day oversight of operations.  2. People will perform according to what is rewarded on the job, regardless of what skills they developed in certification programs.

NAME OF DISTRICT OR STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Effective Leaders....	What Conditions Support This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?	What Conditions Impede This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Impede This Behavior?
<b>Translate Vision Into Operation—</b> They facilitate the development of education policy and the implementation of practice to develop the necessary support systems to achieve vision-driven teaching and learning goals.				

<b>Effective Leaders....</b>	<b>What Conditions Support This Behavior?</b>	<b>How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?</b>	<b>What Conditions Impede This Behavior?</b>	<b>How Does This Condition Impede This Behavior?</b>
<b>Demonstrate An Ongoing Commitment to Results—</b> They drive improvements in teaching and learning and align incentives and consequences toward this end.				

<b>Effective Leaders....</b>	<b>What Conditions Support This Behavior?</b>	<b>How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?</b>	<b>What Conditions Impede This Behavior?</b>	<b>How Does This Condition Impede This Behavior?</b>
<b>Utilize Data Driven Decision-Making—</b> They use data to diagnose and assess the needs of the students and adults in the system and develop strategies to meet those needs and achieve the vision of the system.				



<b>Effective Leaders....</b>	<b>What Conditions Support This Behavior?</b>	<b>How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?</b>	<b>What Conditions Impede This Behavior?</b>	<b>How Does This Condition Impede This Behavior?</b>
<b>Develop Self and Others—</b> They advocate and support professional development focusing on improved student learning.				

Effective Leaders....	What Conditions Support This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?	What Conditions Impede This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Impede This Behavior?
<p><b>Acquire, Allocate and Use Resources Effectively—</b>  They acquire, allocate and efficiently use resources (money, people and time) to have every child meet/exceed high learning standards.</p>				

Effective Leaders....	What Conditions Support This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?	What Conditions Impede This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Impede This Behavior?
<p><b>Develop Supportive Organizational Culture—</b>  They foster an organizational culture to support continuous learning and improvement for all members of the system.</p>				

Effective Leaders....	What Conditions Support This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?	What Conditions Impede This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Impede This Behavior?
<p><b>Incorporate Diverse Perspectives—</b>  They recognize and utilize the diversity (cultural, ethnic, racial, and economic) of the school community at large to meet the needs of all learners and maximize the performance of students and adults.</p>				

Effective Leaders....	What Conditions Support This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Support This Behavior?	What Conditions Impede This Behavior?	How Does This Condition Impede This Behavior?
<p><b>Engage Appropriate Stakeholders—</b>  They build ownership and commitment by involving appropriate stakeholders (e.g. state, district, community leaders) to achieve the goals of the state or district and to support the behaviors identified above.</p>				

## **Directions for Completing the Conditions of Leadership Self-Assessment Analysis**

To complete the assessment of conditions in your district or state, you are asked to review with the team the list of supporting and impeding conditions on pages 6-13. Based on the team's discussion, you should complete the self-assessment analysis (pp. 15-16) by identifying

- A. Conditions that support (page 15)
  - 1. Decide which conditions seem to be most prevalent as supportive (they appear frequently on your analyses, or they are key even if they appear once). Provide up to three.
  - 2. Rate your district or state in your success in using these conditions well in the LEAD or SAELP work you are doing using the scale provided, by boxing the appropriate rating (1, 2, or 3 as defined on the scale on the chart).
  - 3. Answer the open-ended questions in this section.
  - 4. Provide the one, single best example of this.
- B. Conditions that impede (page 15)
  - 1. Decide which conditions seem to be most prevalent as impeding (they appear frequently on your analyses, or they are key even if they appear once). Provide up to three.
  - 2. Rate your district or state in your success in using these conditions well in the LEAD or SAELP work you are doing using the scale provided, by boxing the appropriate rating (1, 2, or 3 as defined on the scale on the chart).
  - 3. Answer the open-ended questions in this section.
  - 4. Provide the one, single best example of this.

Other analyses (page 16)

- C. You are, further, asked to engage your team in a discussion of the degree to which the state and district initiatives are coordinated and aligned. Provide a rating as requested on the form and provide the one, single best piece of evidence.
- D. Please respond to the two additional open-ended questions on page 16.

**Please e-mail your completed tool to Jody Spiro ([jspiro@wallacefoundation.org](mailto:jspiro@wallacefoundation.org)) by February 21, 2005 and send the one best piece of supporting evidence for each category (conditions that support, conditions that impede, and state/district coordination to her by February 28.**

## CONDITIONS OF LEADERSHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS

<b>A. Conditions That Support</b>			
<b>(1) Identify <u>up to three</u> conditions which appear most frequently that <i>support</i> effective leader behaviors:</b>	<b>Your Success In Leveraging These Conditions in LEAD or SAELP. Box appropriate ratings</b> 1=little success 2=moderate success 3=substantial success		
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(2) How will you build on these conditions to further move your system to support effective leader behaviors?</b>			
<b>(3) Provide the one best piece of <u>evidence</u> that you have regarding a condition that <i>supports</i> effective leader behaviors</b>			

<b>B. Conditions That Impede</b>			
<b>(1) Identify <u>up to three</u> conditions which appear most frequently that <i>impede</i> effective leader behaviors:</b>	<b>Your Progress in Changing These Conditions. Box appropriate ratings:</b> 1=no progress 2=moderate progress 3= substantial progress, but more change needed		
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(2a) What is the “root cause” for these conditions that impede effective leader behaviors?</b>			
<b>(2b) What actions will you take to improve these conditions so that new conditions become more supportive of effective leader behaviors?</b>			
<b>(3) Provide the one best piece of <u>evidence</u> that you have regarding a condition that <i>impedes</i> effective leader behaviors.</b>			

C. State/District Coordination		
	1=no coordination 2=moderate coordination 3= substantial progress, but more change needed	
<b>(1) Rate the extent to which your efforts are coordinated with your state (<i>if you are a district</i>) or districts (<i>if you are a state</i>) in moving toward condition changes</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2      3</b>
<b>(2) Provide the one best piece of <u>evidence</u> that you have regarding the extent of coordination between district and state efforts:</b>		

**How has your work improved conditions for district and school level leaders?**

**How has the state's work improved conditions for district and school leaders?**

**What does the state need to do to further improve conditions for district and school leaders?**



## References

Council of Chief State School Officers. (1996). *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium: Standards for Leaders*. Washington, DC.

Knapp, M. S., Copland, M. & Talbert, J. *Leading for Learning: Reflective Tools for School and District Leaders*. (2004). Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S. & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota and Toronto, Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto.

Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory. (2003). *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement*.  
<http://www/mga/prg/cda/files/0404mcrel.pdf>.

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